

Section A: Introduction

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INTERNATIONAL PATTERNS IN EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP

WHY READ THIS BOOK?

Amongst the wide range of academic skills that we emphasise to our students on programmes in educational leadership and management is the need to be critically aware of the motivations and intentions of authors in the literature they consider. In our case, justifying and explaining a book which contributes to the as yet poorly developed literature on international facets of educational leadership and management is not difficult, for we have set out to try to address the growing expectation that practitioners and students will have an international perspective on their roles, responsibilities and tasks. This is not just a personal value statement or academic judgement. Governments promoting the development of educational management and leadership in many countries are expecting that an international perspective will be incorporated in training programmes. In setting up its National College for School Leadership, for example, the British government has stressed that ‘in a world class education service our teachers and school leaders must keep pace with developments in other school systems’ and that leadership development must incorporate ‘the building of international networks of school leaders to debate and exchange practical experiences’ (DfEE, 1999, p. 6). However, the book is not just a response to government exhortation, but the result of a personal commitment to respond to the growing pressures of globalisation and the increasing stress felt by educators worldwide by confirming the validity and celebrating the range and richness of practice. Within such a grand purpose, though, this book has a number of more precise and specific aims:

- 1) To map the international landscape of leadership and management in

education, to provide an overview of the range of approaches and practice in many different national settings, and to seek to identify any global patterns and trends that may exist.

- 2) To challenge some of the 'accepted' norms and paradigms in educational leadership and management by providing a range of perspectives on key themes, drawing on contrasting examples of practice from different national and cultural settings
- 3) To reduce isolation and build confidence in educational managers as part of a global community of professional educators, and to support informed choice about policy and practice amongst practitioners in a wide range of settings from government to school.

Within this introductory chapter we shall explore these aims in more detail, and examine some of the significant generic factors that underpin an understanding of international patterns in educational management and leadership.

MAPPING THE GLOBAL LANDSCAPE OF EDUCATION

Education is a global-scale enterprise. The provision of school-based education is a firmly established component of the social and political landscape of every state across the world, and towards the end of the twentieth century primary and secondary schools were providing education for approximately 1.5 billion children and employment for some 50 million teachers, using some 4 per cent of the sum of global gross national product (GNP).

Despite this clear commitment to education on such a vast scale, the contrasts that may be seen in even a cursory examination of patterns of provision and experience are huge. Three strong themes emerge from such an overview. First, although education is global, participation by children and young people is by no means universal. In the world's developed countries enrolment rates are virtually 100 per cent for children of primary and secondary school age, yet in the least developed countries enrolment rates average only 71 per cent for primary age children and only 19 per cent for secondary age children. The potential for and pressure towards increasing the scope and extent of educational provision is still considerable, therefore. Secondly, beyond simplistic comparisons that identify schooling as, in the main, a process involving teachers in 'classrooms' working with children, there lies a multiplicity of aims, ideologies, practices and outcomes. The daily experience of children, teachers and principals in schools around the world differs fundamentally in the context of extremely diverse expectations from government, community and family. We cannot assume that the motivations for providing education in

any specific setting are similar to those elsewhere. Liberal-humanitarian views of the role of education as developing the whole child as an individual stand in stark contrast to utilitarian views of education as training young people to contribute to economic growth and development. Thirdly, the notion of 'school' is itself a diverse idea, for there is little in common between the rural school in Africa, with no buildings or physical resources, and the sophisticated technology colleges of the UK or the USA.

Contrasts in educational provision and participation are also characterised by sub-national contrasts. These may appear as 'simple' socio-economic patterns with a geographical expression – between urban rich and urban poor, between urban and rural or between core and peripheral economic regions. More frequently this pattern is related to a much wider range of factors, however, in that it reflects the values, histories and cultures of a range of communities and, very frequently, ethnic or religious groups. These factors frequently shape the patterns we can observe in the organisation and management of the education and training system, and either generate or require different responses from national and regional education authorities. Brace (2001) shows, for example, such contrasts within Australia in the patterns that can be seen between Aborigine and other ethnic groups. Demographic contrasts mean that a much higher proportion of Aborigines than other groups are in the under-15 age group and hence in the compulsory school-age phase, yet levels of educational achievement are much lower – only 13.6 per cent of Aborigines possess a post-school qualification (compared with 34 per cent of other groups), only 74 per cent of 15-year-olds remain in full time education (cf. 92 per cent) and only 12 per cent of 19 year olds are in full time education or training (cf. 33 per cent). Such contrasts in outcomes raise fundamental leadership and management challenges to national and state governments and to the political systems of Australian society, and emphasise how dangerous to real understanding generalised interpretations at the national scale can be.

Mapping the international landscape of policy and practice provides a significant challenge in that the precise shape and system of educational management is unique to every national, regional, local or individual school setting. Notwithstanding claims to uniqueness though, we have sought to identify some of the principal approaches that can be observed internationally. Our examples are drawn from every continent and seek to examine patterns from within the major global economic and cultural contrasts – from the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries, the newly industrialising countries, the world's debtor states and the world's least developed countries, and from the major cultural traditions of the West, the Islamic world, Africa, and the great eastern cultures of China, Japan and southern Asia. Our 'mapping' seeks not to be comprehensive but to be indicative, and to represent the range of policy and practice in educational leadership and management.

So far we have sketched in the book's key purposes. We now consider the two central generic themes that emerge throughout the rest of the book, and which underpin a considerable part of our perspective on leadership and management in education – the nature and impact of the processes generically termed 'globalisation' and the centrality of culture in understanding management

GLOBALISATION, EDUCATION AND MANAGEMENT

'Globalisation' is a term commonly used to describe a range of processes and effects that have emerged from the rapid growth of international interactions in trade, travel, communications and culture that has characterised the last three decades. Waters (1995) has identified three interwoven strands to globalisation. Political globalisation is the emergence of groupings and organisations that operate at a wider scale than the single nation state (for example, the EU, the OECD, or the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO)), and which shape policy and practice within many individual countries. Economic globalisation is the growth of international trade and exchange, and the operation of markets and businesses at a scale above that of individual countries. Cultural globalisation involves the international exchange of values and beliefs. While rooted in part in economic processes, it is strongly driven by the communications revolution, dominated by western corporations, which makes access to the images and symbols of other cultures available to many through television, film and music. This process is multi-directional, but is regarded by some as cultural imperialism with the spread of western, particularly American, values and symbols across the globe, and the challenging of indigenous national cultures. This spread of western culture is, of course, not an unplanned side effect of economic and political globalisation, but a key and driving part of it. The success of western business in the global economy is dependent in part on the successful selling of the culture and values on which it is based, or what Beare, Caldwell and Millikan (1989) has described as the 'entrepreneurialism of culture'.

Globalisation is, of course, a misleading term, in that it implies that each of these forces is acting to reach and impact upon all parts of the globe. The processes outlined here are, in fact, rather uneven in their impact and penetration, but are characterised by operating at a scale which is larger than that under the authority of single nation states. The processes operate at an international rather than a national scale with a potential for impacting anywhere on the globe. Equally it is important to recognise that forces of globalisation generate negative responses or rejection at times and are certainly mediated at the national level in terms of how the forces

impact. The effects are not homogeneous, though, since the nature of the interaction between external forces of 'globalisation' and the existing cultural characteristics, with their own inherent pressures of conservatism and/or change, means that a unique outcome is likely in every national setting. Rhoten (2000, p. 615) writing in the context of decentralisation in the education system of Argentina, for example, emphasises that 'supra-national policy paradigms on which national policy agendas are based are neither universal nor inevitable in the processes and outcomes they produce'.

Indeed, writers such as Waters (1995), Parsons (1995), Naisbett and Aburdene (1988) and Brown and Lauder (1997) suggest that the 'direct threat to nation state legitimacy' (Bottery, 1999, p. 302) generates a reaction in governments to at least retain their own national values in the changes that arise from such global forces. In some cases governments may eschew those changes altogether and proclaim the retention of existing values and perspectives that may be in explicit contrast to the values underpinning globalisation. For most national governments, though, there will be the ongoing, and perhaps increasing, tensions between the pressures to respond to global economic and political forces in a way that optimises benefits at the national level, and the pressures for increasing participation, democracy and self-determination at regional, local and individual levels of operation. An important outcome of globalisation is the increased instability, contradiction and ambiguity in the environments within which governments, managers and individuals must operate.

Overall, globalisation is perceived as the spread of western values to the rest of the world. In the context of education we may see this in terms of the promotion of policies on educational outcomes and practices that have emerged in western political settings, and the adoption of western approaches to management. Bottery (1999) identifies the latter phenomenon as 'managerial globalization', and illustrates the concept well in the context of educational management. Specifically, Bottery suggests that the dominant themes in the literature of educational management in the developed world in the last two decades have been:

- a consideration of the public/private/voluntary sector divide, with an emphasis on adapting and adopting approaches from the business world to the world of educational management
- a consideration of educational management practice in other countries.

The consequence of the dominance of these themes lies in the convergence of the perspectives that they generate. The emergence in the literature of business management terminology and the rise in the emphasis on business-based forms of accountability 'infiltrate educational language and begin to spin their conceptual webs' (Bottery, 1999, p. 303). Similarly, as practitioners and governments seek to adopt the 'best' ideas from the international literature on education there begins to emerge a common per-

spective that may 'define what looks increasingly like a global picture of management practice' (Bottery, 1999, p. 303). We must be aware that the spread of 'good practice' internationally, through the educational management literature, through the actions of international organisations such as UNESCO and through the impact of professional development programmes, all of which are dominated by the perspectives of western educational management practitioners and academics, is in danger of presenting such a global picture of good practice.

The educational management literature with which this volume is particularly concerned may be characterised as promoting certain practice as 'good' to the extent that it not only appears normative but takes on a mythic nature. Turner (1990, pp. 3–4) defines myths as 'unquestioned assumptions' or 'a frame of thinking' which serve a variety of purposes. They reassure people that the way they think is the only way, thereby excluding the need for messy and stressful decisions and change. In confirming that the accepted way is the only way, myths may also stabilise and protect existing power structures. Both Schein (1997) and Argyris and Schon (1981) have written about the function of myths in organisations, and the sacrosanct nature of stories and beliefs which are clearly in contradiction to actual practice. Both emphasise the ability of myths to withstand change in the face of all but the most dramatic events. An organisation must be near the point of collapse before long-standing myths about the appropriate way of doing things will be dented. The reason for the degree of resilience of myths is rooted in the important needs they serve. Turner (1990, pp. 4–5) identifies four such purposes, categorised as follows:

- 1) Myths that create, maintain and legitimate past, present and future actions and consequences.
- 2) Myths that maintain and conceal political interests and value systems.
- 3) Myths that help explain and create cause and effect relationships under conditions of incomplete knowledge.
- 4) Myths that rationalise the complexity and turbulence of activities and events to allow for predictable action-taking.

All these purposes are served by myths within organisations, but equally can be applied to the body of literature in question. For example, the concept of leadership, and particularly leadership of the principal, is increasingly stressed by governments and governing boards of schools and colleges. The 'story' of the criticality of the principal's leadership to the success of learners is widespread. The extensive literature on educational leadership contributes to what may be a myth, which can be related to all four of the purposes of myths outlined above. The myth legitimises the increasing powers being devolved to principals and also serves to place the responsibility for failure at their door. The reasons for failure in educational institutions, which are complex, and to which the relationship

with leadership is not clearly understood, can be simplified and reduced to explorations of the nature of leadership on the unquestioned assumption that it is of great importance, despite the fact that some evidence questions whether the role of the principal is indeed critical to improving the experience and achievement of learners. Of course, not all the literature on leadership promotes such ideas, but the work *as a body* has this effect. Our aim, and it is very challenging, is to make explicit some of the myths in the research, writing and thinking about educational leadership and management, and to contribute to some degree to stepping outside the existing largely western frame of thinking to question how far the norms and assumptions within the literature are justified. It is challenging for the writers because stepping outside existing frames of thinking is a hazardous enterprise which risks failure and, even if successful, may provoke resistance and criticism. It is hazardous too for the reader because 'myths enable people to feel better about what they do' (Turner, 1990, p. 5) and questioning them may be uncomfortable.

THE CENTRALITY OF CULTURE

A second generic theme is the importance of considering the role of culture within any meaningful analysis of educational leadership and management. O'Neill (1994) has illustrated how any organisation has three key but interdependent dimensions of structure, activities (processes) and culture which define the essence of that organisation. Culture is that set of values and beliefs, both explicit and implicit, which underpins the organisation and provides the basis for action and decision-making in the absence of direct instructions – it is 'the way we do things around here'. Beare, Caldwell and Millikan (1989) suggest that culture is expressed:

- conceptually, through the valuing of particular ideas, which will be expressed in any explicit aims that the organisation has
- verbally, through the adoption of specific discourses and usage of terminology
- behaviourally, through rituals, ceremonies and social interactions
- visually, through designs and styles adopted by the organisation, perhaps, for example, in dress or uniform.

Prosser (1998) shows how culture is expressed at a range of operational scales within an educational system – at the level of individual classrooms, at the level of teams within the school, at whole school level and at the level of the communities (local, regional and national) within which the school exists. 'Sub-cultures' (Goodson, 1988) and even 'counter cultures' (Beare, Caldwell and Millikan, 1989) may operate, therefore, within organisations and systems, although dominant values and beliefs will be strongly identified. Understanding culture, therefore, is important to

interpreting schools and colleges as organisations, and we must recognise that:

Education, as an essentially human activity, is culture bound. Policy makers and school leaders, therefore, need to be mindful of societal and organisational cultural characteristics when formulating, adopting and implementing policies. The prospect of successful implementation is enhanced when the policy makers and school administrators adopt policies consonant with the characteristics of the prevailing societal culture.

(Dimmock, 1998, p. 366)

Furthermore, we must recognise that the implicit influence of culture will strongly shape the patterns that emerge and that while we must not impute a deterministic relationship between culture and organisational/operational outcomes, culture will provide strong boundaries and constraints to 'what will work'. This is at its most significant in examining patterns of change within national settings in the context of increasing international influence on policy and practice. Change results from the interaction of indigenous and exogenous forces promoting and restraining that change, and that interaction provides a battleground that is 'both the site and the stake' (Bowe, Ball and Gold, 1992) of change. For example, the so-called metatrend of decentralisation in education may confront government with the need to consider the adoption of some form of delegated system of school management. The change itself will be an issue for debate and decision-making, but may also provide a focus for debate on a wide range of matters relating to the nature and purpose of education in the social context of that country's own culture and heritage. The outcome will be a compromise between the extremes of 'no change' and the adoption wholesale of an externally generated initiative, which will itself reflect the impact of cultural values and beliefs on the decision.

At the national scale, plurality of culture is an increasing phenomenon in society as a result of processes of internationalisation and globalisation. However, the existence of specific characteristics in national cultures is clear and their impact on policy and practice in educational management is important to recognise, even though 'minimal research on cultural dimensions has taken place in educational administration' (Dimmock, 1998, p. 367). Much of the understanding of culture in the context of management is based on the ideas of Hofstede (1991), who identifies five dimensions of culture, each comprising a bipolar spectrum, against which a country may be profiled. Hofstede's five dimensions:

- 1) Power-Distance (PD). The distribution of power and acceptance of that pattern varies significantly between societies. In many western societies inequalities of power and the acceptance of considerable distance between the least and most powerful members of society and

- organisations are much less pronounced than, for example, in many Asian societies. Hence China may be seen as having a high Power–Distance Index (PDI) while the UK and the USA have a much lower PDI.
- 2) Individualism–Collectivism (IC). This reflects how far the society emphasises responsibility to the group (the state, family or community) rather than responsibility to the individual. Many African societies are strongly collectivist, in contrast to, for example, the USA and UK, which Hofstede identifies as having the strongest individualist cultures. Societies with low PDIs tend to be strongly individualist.
 - 3) Masculinity–Femininity (MF). The MF dimension illustrates how far the organisation of society reflects the stereotypical male attributes of assertiveness or the female attributes of caring and modesty. Many Latin American or Islamic cultures, for example, are strongly masculine in their culture.
 - 4) Uncertainty Avoidance (UA). Uncertainty avoidance reflects the culture’s tolerance of risk, change and ambiguity. In those cultures where UA is high the emphasis may be on stability and security within existing systems and practices rather than on the adoption of new ideas and approaches, and limited tolerance of a range of ideas. Uncertainty avoidance is often low in plural societies and in those societies emphasising the individual and entrepreneurialism. Islamic nations frequently have high UA, whereas western and Asian cultures frequently have low UA.
 - 5) Long-term–Short-Term (LS). This reflects how far the society is focused on long term perspectives, with a tolerance or avoidance of short-term ‘costs’ in the interests of long term gains. Dimmock (1998) shows how in many societies these factors are finely-balanced – for example, in Confucian Asian societies ‘the values associated with long-term orientation, such as thrift (and) perseverance . . . are counterbalanced by values associated with short-term orientation such as respect for tradition, fulfilment of social obligations and protection of one’s face’.

It is important to stress that these dimensions provide a broad, subjective, general analysis of national organisational cultures, within which sub-cultures and counter-cultures will be identifiable, and the ideas of cultural determinism proposed by Parsons (1966) must be strongly rejected. However, such analysis does provide a useful starting point for understanding the cultural setting within which specific patterns of policy and practice have emerged. For example, the importance of understanding the inherent cultural values that underpin the education system is emphasised by Chang (2000) in the context of Singapore and by Hallinger and Kantamara (2000) in the context of Thailand. Chang (2000) has examined ‘state’ values and individualism in the development of education in Singapore in contrast to those in North America or Western Europe. He asserts that:

In North America and Western Europe the individual is given primacy in relation to society. It follows that access to education . . . is perceived of as an uncompromising right of the individual . . . [T]he guiding principle of the Singapore government's education policy is to give top priority to the overall interests of society.

(Chang, 2000, pp. 28–9)

Chang describes this focus on the interests of society as 'communitarianism', and places it alongside five other core state values in Singapore in influencing education – pragmatism; neo-Darwinism; conservative liberalism; good government (government which is 'clean, honest, capable, efficient, forward-looking and firm' [Chang, 2000, p. 28]); and a commitment to the Confucian concept of *zhongyang* ('golden means oriented rationalism') which promotes the view that the best solution to any problem is located between two sets of alternatives, and so excludes both excessively radical or conservative perspectives.

Hallinger and Kantamara examine the introduction of the western concept of school-based management into Thailand, and conclude that 'the values and assumptions underlying these modern educational practices run counter to traditional cultural norms of Thai society' (Hallinger and Kantamara, 2000, p. 191). The government strategy to promote school-based management, therefore, has required significant attention to management within the cultural constraints and to the development of strategies to overcome traditional deference (*grewng jai*) which runs counter to the cultural assumptions of devolved responsibility.

The processes of globalisation may be interpreted as leading to the spread of western culture and values to most countries and societies, where there is an inevitable interaction with the existing societal culture. Cultural change is inherent in all societies, although it progresses at differing speeds, but confrontation with western values may lead to more rapid change. Understanding the possible outcomes of that interaction necessitates a clear knowledge of both the inherent components of existing culture and the areas in which exposure to western culture will generate tensions and frictions.

INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH IN EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

There are difficulties in using existing literature to support such a critical view of policy and practice taking account of the centrality of culture. Research in educational leadership and management, while extensive and productive in quantity, has considerable imbalances in its coverage. The literature from the western, developed, English-speaking world is substantial and wide-ranging. This literature contains research-based studies

at a range of scales, and a wide literature representing analysis, reflection and experience-based perspectives is also readily available. Outside English language journals, however, the range of literature is extremely limited. The output from research and debate in other cultural settings often finds its only outlet in the English language literature, or is based on research undertaken by western scholars examining other cultural settings only as interested outsiders. We have been aware in selecting material, examples, ideas and critiques for this book, therefore, of the imbalances in what has been available to us, and the issues that this raises. We recognise, for example, the danger of implicitly promoting the western, Anglo-Saxon perspective implicit in the majority of the literature we have used, and as authors we recognise that we are ourselves the product of the paradigms and cultures that we inhabit. We have tried to provide breadth and balance in our coverage of geographical and cultural realms. However, this has provided a challenge to selection in relation to the developed world, and a major task of exploration and discovery in relation to other environments. We have tried to apply our typical standards of critical review to all the materials we have used, but recognise that reliance on single sources or official government publications in some spheres has made this very difficult.

Against such a picture of the evidence base it is inevitable that we would emphasise the need for more research into both comparative aspects of educational management and into the practice of management in a range of social, cultural, economic and political environments. However, it is also clear that our own commitment to research-based decision-making, policy-making and action, based on western academic standards, is neither practical nor necessarily valued universally. In many cultural settings the encouragement of critical or reflective practice is not welcome, for example, and may challenge fundamental social values. While our own commitment to the importance of research in informing understanding and practice is an unequivocal ideal, the opportunity to reflect, develop and improve practice globally cannot wait on the emergence of a comprehensive research base. Rather we would seek to promote reflective practice at all levels of management, leadership and policy-making, from government office to classroom, through the use, where appropriate, of informed dialogue, sharing of ideas and perspectives and appropriate professional development. Small-scale research projects in the traditions of action research may provide a useful adjunct to this. Overall we are stressing the importance of recognising what can and cannot be achieved in each individual reader's own professional setting, and the support of appropriate (sometimes primitive or intermediate) professional development technologies.

To summarise, despite the almost overwhelming pressures of globalisation which militate against celebrating difference, and despite the limitations of existing literature recognising the important centrality of

culture, any perspective on educational leadership and management must emphasise the need to:

- not accept uncritically any concept or approach developed in different cultural, economic and political environments
- recognise that there is no single universal principle of educational management that is not shaped by contextual factors at a local, implementational level
- recognise that the values of education are frequently different from those of business, and that the emphasis on management as a term risks detracting from the wide range of social and cultural purposes of education
- recognise that educational management is about operating in a range of contexts from global to local, but where the local factors will always shape to some extent the precise nature of the educational process.

Such a perspective underpins the ideas presented elsewhere in this book.

BUILDING AN INTERCULTURAL COMMUNITY

The previous discussion has elaborated our first two aims of mapping the international landscape and challenging accepted norms. The third aim relates not solely to the knowledge that educators bring to their task, but also to how they feel about their work. Isolation is a constant reality for many in education, working as a sole adult with children or adults, confined to a single classroom for the majority of time. Educators struggle to find time and space to share their experience with others working in the same institution, let alone people working in schools and colleges elsewhere in their country or in other parts of the world. To address the third aim of reducing isolation and building confidence, this volume attempts to offer a bridge, to link all those contributing to the endeavour of educating children and adults wherever they may be. In reading and responding to ideas drawn from different parts of the world such isolation may be reduced as people can reflect on their engagement with the international community of educators. If such a sense of a global community is truly to be attempted, it is likely to be created not just at the technical level, by exchanging pedagogic or management practice, but also more fundamentally by some connection of values, of shared understandings while avoiding, even by implication, the promotion of selected values and philosophies as in some sense the norm. It is a very challenging intention to communicate with educators throughout the world and find a means of engaging them without recourse to justification or motivation that is culturally bounded. However demanding to identify, a common ground platform for communication is needed and must offer the chance for sharing and evaluating practice without assuming shared values.

Ironically, a concept that is one of the most widely contested, the concept of professionalism, may offer a possible framework for intercultural communication. The history of those who work in education is the history of the struggle for professionalisation. Teachers and principals have striven for their role to be recognised as having critical importance to individuals and to society, and to involve high-level skills and dedication (and commensurate rewards). Eraut (1994) reminds us that professionalism is a concept which can be understood in a number of ways, relating not only to the ideal type traits of high-status professions such as medicine and law, but also to class power struggles, with professionalism as a means of securing and protecting status. He also suggests that amongst the traits of professionalism in the lists compiled by various writers are some which are culturally dependent. It is not our intention to debate the wider aspects of definitions of professionalism, but to find in the concept a means of supporting our aim to communicate with educators throughout the world, by focusing on two selected defining characteristics that may be universal. First, professionalism rests on the acquisition of knowledge and expertise. Professionals spend time and effort learning how to fulfil their role. Consequently, we hope that by exploring policy and practice in different parts of the world we will contribute to the knowledge of educators, wherever they work and whatever their role. Secondly, professionalism depends on self-regulation (Bergen, 1988). Judgements must be made on how to act, based not solely on the compulsion of external authority, but on the intrinsic arbiters of values, knowledge and understanding.

We are well aware that choices may be made at different levels within any educational system, and that the degree of freedom to use judgement may be shaped by how the role of a teacher, principal, classroom helper, regional or national administrator/manager is viewed. Nevertheless, it is our belief that all those who work in education do make choices, and that a greater understanding of the range of practice throughout the world may usefully inform such choices. Knowledge is a key component of such professionalism. Within this notion, though, we must reiterate the 'health warning' stressed earlier in this chapter. Exploration of the international range of policy and practice may be founded on a spectrum of approaches from the normative to absolute relativism. Both extremes are equally unhelpful. The normative approach, suggesting one method is universally applicable or in some sense preferable to others in any environment, is to deny the richness of different contexts and desired outcomes of education throughout the world. However, the converse extreme, of accepting any current practice as somehow justified by accepted tradition and beliefs is equally unacceptable, inviting complacency and stasis rather than stability or improvement. The appropriate selection of practice will lie somewhere between the two ends of the spectrum and the choice is likely to be guided most fundamentally by values. It is our belief that the values of an individual or team are elastic. They can be stretched, but parameters

will remain beyond which fundamental principles cannot move. Through this volume we hope to increase knowledge and understanding of leadership and management in education and to encourage the elasticity of values in thinking through or rethinking choices about developing practice in the individual context of the school/college or role, between the extremes of normativism and relativism. In this our central value as authors is a belief in the ability of every individual in education to make a contribution to improving education and the achievement of the desired outcomes.